

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KINGST 00207 151924Z

43

ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9903

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

COMNAVBASE GTMO

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 0207

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, JM

SUBJECT: PNP SELF-DEFENSE FORCE PROPOSAL DENOUNCED

REF: KINGSTON 0164

1. P.M. MANLEY'S ANNOUNCED INTENTION (REFTEL) TO FORM PNP SELF-DEFENSE FORCE HAS TRIGGERED WIDESPREAD OUTCRIES OF DISAPPROVAL AND CONCERN. POLICE COMMISSIONER BASIL ROBINSON INITIALLY STATED HE HAD NOT BEEN CONSULTED PRIOR TO MANLEY'S ANNOUNCEMENT AND REJECTED THE CLAIM THAT SUCH A FORCE WAS NECESSARY. HE REVERSED HIMSELF LATER AFTER BEING SUMMONED TO JAMAICA HOUSE, AND SUBSEQUENTLY PUT OUT A STATEMENT THAT THERE WAS NO CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PROPER FUNCTION OF THE POLICE FORCE AND THE ROLE OUTLINED FOR THE PNP GROUPS.

2. MEMBERS OF THE POLICE MOBILE RESERVE STOPPED WORKING AT NOON JANUARY 12 IN PROTEST, AND IN SUPPORT OF THEIR
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 KINGST 00207 151924Z

DEMANDS FOR THE RESIGNATION OF COMMISSION ROBINSON

AND OTHER SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS. THE MEN WENT BACK TO WORK AFTER THEIR COMMANDER, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OWEN STEPHENSON, PROMISED TO TAKE UP THEIR GROUSES WITH MINISTER OF SECURITY MUNN AND THE P.M.

3. IN ADDITION TO ROBINSON, THE POLICE OFFICERS WHOSE RESIGNATIONS ARE BEING SOUTH ARE: ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DON POWELL, IN CHARGE OF OPERATIONS; SUPERINTENDENT ERIC SIBBLIES, IN CHARGE OF KINGSTON WESTERN DIVISION; AND ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT D.V. MCKAY, ALSO OF THE WESTERN DIVISION. THE POLICEMEN WHO DEMONSTRATED ARE ALSO SEEKING THE RIGHT TO CARRY A GUN WHILE OFF DUTY.

4. FOLLOWING AN EVENING MEETING WITH THE P.M. JANUARY 13 THE POLICE FEDERATION ISSUED A STATEMENT THAT IT "AGREED TO ALLOW THE PNP TO APPOINT A WATCHMAN CORPS TO WATCH PRIVATELY ON PNP PROPERTIES AND TO PROTECT PNP PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE AT THEIR GROUP MEETINGS ON PRIVATE PROPERTIES. THIS SHOULD NOT BE EXTENDED TO INCLUDE DUTIES AT PUBLIC OR POLITICAL MEETINGS SINCE THIS WOULD BE USURPING THE FUNCTION OF THE SECURITY FORCES. WE ARE SATISFIED THAT WE ARE CAPABLE OF FULFILLING OUR OBLIGATION IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE NATION."

5. THE JAMAICA COUNCIL OF COURCHES HAS CALLED ON THE PM TO RECONSIDER HIS DECISION AS IT WOULD INCREASE POLARIZATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, AND INSTEAD HAS URGED STRONGER MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE REGULAR SECURITY FORCES. THE JAMAICA MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION HAS BRANDED THE SELF-DEFENSE FORCE PROPOSAL "UNCONSTRUCTIVE, DESTRUCTIVE, AND DIVISIVE" AND CALLED FOR TOTAL SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL FORCES OF THE LAW, THE POLICE AND THE JDF.

6. MEDIA REACTION HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY SHARP. A DAILY NEWS EDITORIAL ASSERTED THAT THE P.M.'S PROPOSAL "... IS SO FRIGHTENING IN ITS IMPLICATIONS THAT WE WOULD URGE HIM TO RECONSIDER HIS POSITION O AND Y GQ PA. FOR IF SUCH

GROUPS ARE SET UP, EVEN THOUGH THEY WILLNOT BE ARMED,
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PAGE 03 KINGST 00207 151924Z

THE COUNTRY COULD WELL COME TO THE BRINK OF CIVIL WAR."

7. JLPS OPPOSITION LEADER EDWARD SEAGA HAS CALLED THE PROPOSAL "DEMENTED" AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE SECURITY FORCES WILL BE GIVEN "FREEDOM" TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF LAW AND ORDER WITHOUT POLITICAL CONTROLS. HE CLAIMED THAT "THE SO-CALLED 'DEFENSE FORCE' IS NOT ABOUT TO BE ESTABLISHED; IT HAS BEEN UNDER TRAINING

OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS WITH THE AID OF EX-MILITARY PERSONNEL FINANCED FROM A CERTAIN SOURCE."

8. SEAGA SEES THE SELF-DEFENSE FORCE PROPOSAL AS ONLY THE PRECURSOR OF A FULL-PLEDGED PNP POPULAR MILITIA, WHICH HE POINTED OUT IS NOT UNUSUAL IN SOCIALIST/ COMMUNIST SOCIETIES, AND IS IN KEEPING WITH THE CONCEPT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE REVOLUTION ESTABLISHED IN CUBA.

9. COMMENT: MANLEY APPEARS INTENT ON FORMING THE SELF-DEFENSE FORCE DESPITE THE WIDESPREAD PUBLIC OUTCRY AGAINST IT. IN HIS MEETINGS WITH THE POLICE HE HAS BACK-PEDALED BUT NOT BACKED OFF THE IDEA. HIS ASSURANCES TO THE POLICE FEDERATION THAT IT WILL BE AN UNARMED "WATCHMAN CORPS" IS NOTHING BUT SEMANTIC SLEIGHT OF HAND.

10. THE FEAR PLANTED BY SEAGA THAT THE PNP "WATCHMEN" WILL IN FACT BE A CUBAN-TRAINED MILITIA WAS GIVEN A BOOST BY A HEADLINE IN THIS MORNING'S PAPER THAT 280 CUBANS ARE TO ARRIVE ON ISLAND BY THE END OF NEXT MONTH "TO BUILD A SECONDARY SCHOOL AT TWICKENHAM PARK." GIVEN THE STRONG CUBAN INFLUENCE ON THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT AND THEIR MODUS OPERANDI ELSEWHERE IN THE THIRD WORLD, THIS FEAR MAY BE JUSTIFIED. GERARD

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